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## **News Releases from Region 04**

### **EPA Inducts Second Class of the Environmental Justice Academy**

#### **Participants hail from Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee**

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**ATLANTA** – Today, representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) inducted 17 participants to the second class of the Environmental Justice (EJ) Academy. The EJ Academy is a rigorous, in-depth leadership development program where participants meet monthly for nine months. This year's class includes Fellows from seven Southeastern states, including Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, and one from Maryland.

“Participants should feel honored to have been selected through a highly competitive process,” said Anne Heard, EPA’s Acting Regional Administrator for the Southeast during a special program at Atlanta Metropolitan College in Atlanta, Ga. to kick-off the 2016/17 program. “The EJ Academy will equip Fellows with skills to take back and become champions for environmental justice. There are high expectations for all participants to make a visible difference in their communities upon completion of the program.”

The following individuals were selected for this year’s class, by state:

**Alabama**

- Tina Bennett, Oliver Robinson Foundation, Birmingham, Ala.
- Karen Jones, Jacob's Ladder, Triana, Ala.

**Georgia**

- Michael Black, Georgia EJ Alliance and Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU)-M, Decatur, Ga.
- Charlette Clark, Georgia EJ Alliance, Kennesaw, Ga.
- Angelica Cox, Ben Hill community, Atlanta, Ga.
- Chandra Farley, Southface and Open Architecture Collaborative, Atlanta Ga.
- Yeou-Rong Jih, City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Sustainability, Atlanta, Ga.
- Keena Johnson, Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, Alpharetta, Ga.
- Deion Love, USDA Forest Service and NAACP Emory University Chapter, Atlanta, Ga.
- Jamel Thompson, Urban Detox Universal, Inc., Jonesboro, Ga.

**Kentucky**

- David James, Louisville Metro Council, Louisville, Ky.

**Maryland**

- Jacqueline Norris, Prince George's County, Mount Rainier, Md.

**Mississippi**

- Marvin Perry, Airport Circle, Grenada, Miss.

**North Carolina**

- Veronica Bitting, North Carolina Technical Assistance Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Raleigh, N.C.
- Ernest Jr. Mooring, Town of Navassa, Navassa, N.C.

**South Carolina**

- Marvin Smalls, Low Country Alliance for Model Communities, Hanahan, S.C.

**Tennessee**

- William Hampton, Memphis and Shelby County Lead Safe Collaborative Inform the People, Memphis, Tenn.

EPA launched the EJ Academy in September 2015 to cultivate skills participants can use to identify and address environmental challenges in their communities. This year, Atlanta Metropolitan State College became a co-sponsor of the Academy and will host class sessions on its campus throughout the nine-month program.

The EJ Academy will teach participants:

- How to leverage human, social, intellectual, technical, legal, and financial resources to make long-term progress in a community;
- How to use consensus-building processes and skills to help ensure successful collaboration and negotiations;
- How to increase capacity to address communities' environmental and/or public health issues; and
- A basic understanding of environmental justice and environmental regulations

As a result of participating in the EJ Academy, graduates will receive the following benefits:

- Complete a community portfolio, which may assist in securing funding, describing community resources and challenges and establishing credibility amongst stakeholders;
- Complete an action plan to guide organizational activities;
- Identify and secure potential partners to assist communities with addressing their challenges;
- Interact directly with technical experts from EPA and other organizations;
- Network with regional community leaders to establish mutually beneficial relationships;
- Be matched with nearby academic institutions in EPA's College/Underserved Community Partnership Program (CUPP) to provide ongoing technical assistance; and
- Receive individualized feedback, guidance, and assistance from experts.

The EJ Academy training program is primarily based on EPA's Collaborative Problem-Solving (CPS) Model, a seven-step process for bringing about positive change and community revitalization by having community leaders, community members, and their stakeholders working together. Each module focuses on one element of the CPS Model and includes a combination of lectures by subject-matter experts, in-class exercises, and homework assignments.

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